



# Writing Exemplar Training Packet



**WSAS Knowledge and Concepts Examinations**

**Writing Exemplar Training Packet**

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# Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to provide teachers with “hands on” experience in holistic scoring. It contains five training papers for each writing prompt. Used in conjunction with the *Writing Exemplar Booklet*, these training papers can be scored and then compared with the pre-established scores and commentaries.

It should be emphasized that these training papers are not intended for use as exemplars or anchor papers. Rather, they are intended to give a sense of the variety of types of responses at a given score point.

Each set of five training papers contains a different array of score points, arranged in a random sequence. In a given set, there may be more than one paper with the same pre-established score, or each of the five scores may be unique. This lack of pattern is intentional, the intent being to more closely approximate an authentic scoring experience.

## Training for Holistic Scoring

The training procedures outlined here represent a condensed version of those followed by CTB/McGraw-Hill’s Custom Evaluation Center. They have been used with great success over the course of numerous scoring projects. Training may be administered to groups of any size, but it is generally more efficient to subdivide larger groups into teams of six to ten people for purposes of discussion and consensus building. These procedures can also be adapted for individual “self-directed” training if so desired.

### The following steps should be taken during training:

1. Using information from the *Writing Exemplar Booklet*, introduce the concept of holistic scoring to the evaluators. Stress the idea that the essays are to be scored based on the overall effect of the writing, and emphasize that scoring should proceed swiftly and with complete concentration. In light of the fact that every evaluator comes to holistic scoring with his or her own opinions and biases, it is imperative to stress that the goal of this holistic scoring system is to provide accurate and consistent scores based solely on the Exemplars and the Guidelines for Holistic Scoring.
2. Have evaluators read the prompt(s) they will be scoring, along with the introductory passage if applicable. Then have them write a composition in response to one of the prompts. Allow about 20 minutes for this activity, and then collect the papers.
3. Refer evaluators to the *Writing Exemplar Booklet* and have them study the general Guidelines for Holistic Scoring and the Exemplar Papers for the specific prompt(s) they will be scoring. Discussion of the exemplars and the accompanying commentaries should reinforce the notion that the Exemplars and the Guidelines are the foundation for all subsequent scoring. Any concerns about the exemplar scores should be addressed by the trainer, but it should be emphasized that these scores are not negotiable.
4. Have evaluators open the *Writing Exemplar Training Packet* to the appropriate set of training

papers. (Be sure to admonish the evaluators against reading ahead to the pre-established scores at this point.) Have them score the papers using the Guidelines and the Exemplars as their guide. Provide a separate sheet of paper on which the evaluators can record their scores for all five papers.

5. Have the evaluators turn to the corresponding key scores and commentaries (located at the end of each set of training papers). Compare the scores given by the evaluators with the pre-established scores.
6. Discuss any discrepancies in the scores, referring to the commentaries to help evaluators understand why the papers received the scores they did. Be sure to relate the papers and their given scores to the Holistic Guidelines and to the Exemplars. The goal of this discussion is to achieve consensus, but do not encourage overanalysis. If group consensus is not achieved for every paper, remember that differences of one score point are acceptable, and that the final score in such cases is the average of the two scores.
7. Repeat steps 2 through 6 for the remaining prompt(s) to be scored.

## *Common Pitfalls in Holistic Scoring*

Evaluators new to holistic scoring may give divergent or unreliable scores due to a misplaced emphasis on the analytic traits of student writing, or due to a relativistic approach to scoring. These two pitfalls should be addressed early in the training process, and guarded against during the course of a scoring project.

Many evaluators, especially teachers of long standing, already have their own approaches to writing evaluation. Often, these approaches center on specific writing traits such as spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Holistic scoring takes all of these traits into consideration, but its focus remains on the overall effect of the writing. Holistic evaluators should ask themselves this question: Taken as a whole, how well does the essay succeed in its purpose to persuade, inform, or describe? Though specific traits have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the writing, holistic scoring is not an exercise in editing. Indeed, it would be counterproductive and time consuming to scan essays for every missing comma or lapse in grammar. A useful analogy for holistic, or “total impression,” scoring can be found in the way one views an Impressionist painting. Standing six inches from a Van Gogh self-portrait, a viewer may complain that the colors are not true and that the brush strokes are crude. The same painting, however, when viewed from six feet away, has a completely different overall effect: its “flaws” fade away, and the work can be appreciated holistically.

Another common pitfall for evaluators is the tendency to lapse into a relativistic mode of scoring. This occurs when, instead of gauging each paper against the Exemplars and the scoring Guidelines, an evaluator begins to gauge a paper by the ones that precede it. This can lead to inaccurate and/or discrepant scoring. For instance, after scoring a number of excellent essays, an evaluator may judge an average essay too harshly based on its juxtaposition to the earlier essays, and give it a score of “3” instead of the “4” it should receive based on its intrinsic merits. To guard against this tendency, especially during long scoring projects, it is important to have the evaluators reread the Exemplars and the Guidelines at the beginning of each scoring day.

# ***Training Papers and Key Scores***

## ***Grade 4***



## Training Papers to Score

### Grade 4 • Informative Writing

#### INTRODUCTION

Helen Keller (1880–1968) lost her sight and hearing as the result of a serious illness when she was a baby. For more than five years, Helen lived with her family in Alabama, barely able to communicate even her simplest wishes. When Helen was seven years old, a teacher named Anne Sullivan arrived from Boston to teach her a special sign language that allowed Helen to “talk” to other people for the first time. But even with a new teacher and new language skills, Helen still had many difficulties to overcome. Here, in her book *The Story of My Life*, Helen writes about what happened one day when she was seven and her teacher left her alone in a tree while she went to get a picnic lunch. Read the passage and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

Suddenly a change passed over the tree. All the sun’s warmth left the air. I knew the sky was black, because all the heat, which meant light to me, had died out of the atmosphere. A strange odour came up from the earth. I knew it, it was the odour that always precedes a thunderstorm, and a nameless fear clutched at my heart. I felt absolutely alone, cut off from my friends and the firm earth. The immense, the unknown, enfolded me. I remained still and expectant; a chilling terror crept over me. I longed for my teacher’s return; but above all things I wanted to get down from that tree. A shiver ran through the tree, and the wind sent forth a blast that would have knocked me off had I not clung to the branch with might and main. The tree swayed and strained. The small twigs snapped and fell about me in showers. A wild impulse to jump seized me, but terror held me fast. I crouched down in the fork of the tree. The branches lashed about me. Just as I was thinking the tree and I should fall together, my teacher seized my hand and helped me down. I clung to her, trembling with joy to feel the earth under my feet once more.



**Prompt for Grade 4 • Informative Writing**

Imagine that you are like Helen Keller and cannot see or hear. Think about the things you normally do in a day. Explain how you would do them without being able to see or hear.

Example A

*In the morning I would need someone to help me find my toothbrush. And then I would need someone to show me to breakfast.*

*At school I would need my friends to help me with my work. I would be able to read if the book was in French. At the end of school I would need my mother to take me home.*

*I would need someone to help me change my clothes and find my toys. I guess I would need help with everything, cause nothing would ever be the same again.*

If I were like Helen Keller my life would be very hard. If I wanted to play my clarinet I would need my music to be written out in braille. Then I would need to memorize it note by note. Afterward I would need someone to help me find the fingerings for the clarinet.

If I wanted to play baseball, volleyball, football, soccer, basketball, or run for track I wouldn't even know which way I would be going. So I wouldn't be very good at sports.

If I wanted to watch television it wouldn't be any fun because it would be like staring at an empty box. But maybe my mom could tell me what was on the TV using sign language.

In a way it would be fun to be kind of like Helen Keller because you would get to learn a different kind of reading. I would always be reading in braille because I like to read a lot. It might even be an adventure.

It would be very hard for me because I like to talk. Also to hear music.

I would be very sad. It would be like if I was locked in black box, and can't see or hear.

If there was something wrong with me how would I tell my parents. How about if I needed a conference at school. I could not tell them. I think it would be a experience I would not like.

## Example D

If I could not see or hear it would be hard to do the things I do like clean my room, read, skate, play chess, play sports, watch t.v., listen to music. It would be hard to clean your room cause you would not know when it needed to be cleaned. It would be impossible to read because you would not know where a book was and how to read it or what you were reading. It would also be hard to skate cause you could not hear a car if it were coming at you and you could not see where you were going. It would be hard to play chess cause you could not tell a king from a queen, and you could not hear if they had check on your king. It would also be hard to play sports cause you would not know where to go or what to do. These are a few things it would be hard to do. I hope I never find out myself.

MY mom would help me get me around the house and to my school. I would be in a spaille Day class and I would be in a weelchair. I would righted the Bus to school and righted It back home. People would make fun of me because I can't do anythin. It would be no fun. MY mom would have to feed me and get my cloths on. I Connt go anytplace fun like the zoo or the wild animals Park. I would Connt no anyting thing. It would be horble and bad.



## Key Scores for Training Papers

### Grade 4 • Informative Writing

#### KEY SCORE

4

#### Commentary for Example A

This is a very brief essay presenting several scenarios in which a blind and deaf person would need help. Despite its limited support, this essay is focused, organized, and has a sense of closure. The use of language in this essay is competent, and sentence structure is somewhat varied.

5

#### Commentary for Example B

After listing some of the limitations of being blind and deaf, this essay concludes on an upbeat note (“It might even be an adventure”). It is well balanced, raising some logical difficulties before focusing on the less negative aspects of handicaps such as Helen’s. Control of language is good, and support is ample and relevant. There are no serious errors in spelling or mechanics.

3

#### Commentary for Example C

This essay is weakened by a lack of development. It does give a couple of overly specific examples of what it is like to be deaf and blind (e.g., “How about if I needed a confrence at school”), but these seem tacked on rather than integrated with the rest of the essay. The lack of transitions and errors in sentence construction and grammar interfere somewhat with the flow of the writing.



KEY SCORE

4

## Commentary for Example D

This essay is a brief summary of several things it would be difficult or impossible to do if one were blind and deaf. Support is relevant and adequate. The writing is fairly fluent and the sentence structure is varied. Although the organizational plan is somewhat weak, the essay does have a sense of closure.

3

## Commentary for Example E

This essay remains focused on the “horrible and bad” aspects of being blind and deaf, but the organization is scattershot and the use of language is awkward. Numerous errors in spelling and grammar sometimes make it difficult to follow. There are relevant supporting details, but they are few in number.

## Training Papers to Score

### Grade 4 • Descriptive Writing

#### INTRODUCTION

Here is a story called “Grandma’s Favorite Bell” by Marilyn Kratz. The story is about a girl who enjoys visiting her grandmother. Read the story and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

#### Grandma’s Favorite Bell

Every Saturday morning Abbie went to Grandma’s house. It was Abbie’s favorite time in the week.

Grandma always made them each a piece of hot, buttery toast. She let Abbie sprinkle sugar and cinnamon on hers.

Then Abbie always helped dust Grandma’s bell collection.

One Saturday morning Abbie said, “Grandma, which is your favorite bell?”

Grandma’s eyes twinkled. “Why don’t you try to guess?” she said.

“Is it this old school bell you used when you were a teacher?” asked Abbie.

“No,” said Grandma. “But it does remind me of many happy times.”

“Is it this glass Christmas bell?”

“No,” said Grandma. “Try again.”

“Is it this string of little round bells that horses used to wear?”

Grandma smiled. “They have a cheerful sound, but not as cheerful as the sound of my favorite bell.”

Abbie looked at all the bells in Grandma’s tall glass cupboard. There were big bells and little bells, shiny bells and old bells, painted bells and plain bells.

“It is too hard to guess,” Abbie said.  
“Please tell me which bell is your favorite.”

Grandma gave Abbie a big, warm hug and said, “My favorite bell is my doorbell when I hear you ring it every Saturday morning.”

Abbie laughed, and she hugged Grandma back. “That’s my favorite bell, too,” she said.

**Prompt for Grade 4 • Descriptive Writing**

Abbie and her grandmother have a bell that is very special to them both. Do you have something that is as special to you as their bell is to them? Describe your special object. Tell what it looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and feels like.

## Example A

*My dog Megan*

*My dog Megan is white, has curly hair, and has brown eyes with a little pink nose. The sound she makes is a very high pitched bark. Megan smells like she is rolling in the grass. Sometimes she gets real hyper for some silly reason and she runs all around the house like she is just a little puppy, but really she is kinda old. She can still have puppies though. She's not too old for that! Megan feels very soft, warm, and cuddly. She sleeps with me every night in my bed. Sometimes, when she is very tired, she likes to snuggle close and get warm under the blanket. My mom says that I spoil her. Even though Megan doesn't know how to sit, rollover, lay, play dead, and beg she is still my favorite dog in the world. I know she loves me a lot, and I love her a lot too. I always take Megan for a walk whenever I'm not busy. She loves to go on walks a whole lot! She is a vey good dog to have and I love her forever. Even when she dies. No person can ever have a better dog because I think that she is the best dog in the whole, wide, world. I love my dog Megan.*

*The End*

*I like the bell that is a cow bell it is perttey and I like it very much. I hope the grandmas and the gril likes it because it very shinny and if I was a cow I would love putting it om becous I think it'll look perttey so very shinny om me I ware it all the day and if some boddy naver git it off. I would say no and I'll git mad and I'll gast bok then off nee with ny horns.*

*I have alot of thes objects.  
I never tasted thes objects, and they don't have much  
smell. The front of them are smooth, but some are not  
smooth all over. All of them are difrent colors. They  
all have ink in them. Did you guess, the specel objects  
are my books?*

### *My Special Teddy Bear*

*My special object is my favorite teddy bear. It is big and brown. It is the only teddy bear that I like because I had him sense I was a baby.*

*My teddy bear doesn't talk, so I don't really know how he would sound, but probably nice and friendly.*

*He smells very good and fresh when I hug him. I take really good care of my teddy bear.*

*I don't know how he tastes like I've never tried and never will.*

*My teddy bear feels very smooth and soft and very furry. When I hold him it feels like I'm hugging a nice soft blanket. He is special to me.*

It is square and part of it is silver and it is glass and it is small and it does not sound like a bell or a animal. And it dose not smell like anything or tast like anything and it feels ruff.





## Key Scores for Training Papers

### Grade 4 • Descriptive Writing

#### KEY SCORE

5

#### Commentary for Example A

This essay uses a wealth of detail to describe a pet dog. Organization is balanced and logical, although the opening is somewhat abrupt. Sentence structure is varied and mostly correct. Engagement is evident throughout this enthusiastic essay (e.g., “She can still have puppies though. She’s not too old for that!”).

2

#### Commentary for Example B

This essay is a weakly controlled effort to describe a cowbell. It rambles, and in a confused fashion tries to incorporate the grandmother and the little girl from the passage *Grandma’s Favorite Bell*. This essay is seriously compromised by errors in spelling and mechanics. Although there is little sense of an organizational plan, the focus does remain on the cowbell.

3

#### Commentary for Example C

This essay describes, in a very rudimentary fashion, the writer’s books. Details, although focused and logically organized, are too few and too vague (e.g., “I never tasted thes objects, and they don’t have much smell”). Unvaried sentence structure and a lack of transitions result in a list-like essay.

KEY SCORE

4

## Commentary for Example D

This essay does a competent job of describing a teddy bear. It assembles a brief list of attributes into a well organized package. The conclusion is somewhat abrupt, but overall this essay's use of language and its moderate sense of engagement make it an adequate piece of writing.

2

## Commentary for Example E

Support for this brief and confusing essay is obviously insufficient, because the object being described is never revealed. There is some evidence of organization, but the plan is not brought to closure. Frequent errors in spelling and grammar make the essay difficult to read.



# ***Training Papers and Key Scores***

## ***Grade 8***



## Training Papers to Score Grade 8 • Informative Writing

### INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we move through our lives achieving goals quickly and purposefully. Other times we relax and try to enjoy the journey more than the arrival. Here is a passage that asks you to consider two approaches to an arduous task. Read the passage and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

### **Two Ways Up the Mountain**

Not far from where you live is a very beautiful mountain. Its peak is high above sea level. There are two ways of climbing the mountain; both require that you be in good condition. One approach to the peak is from the west and takes three days. The route is very scenic. You go through forests and meadows, past lakes and streams. Then the trail winds easily but steadily over exposed granite up to the top. The other way up the peak is from the east. On this climb, the trail is steep, with dozens of switchbacks or zigzags. You must negotiate rough rock screes and outcroppings and then cross snowfields before you reach the peak. This eastern route is less scenic, but you can make the climb in a day and a half.

**Prompt for Grade 8 • Informative Writing**

Choose the way you would most like to climb the mountain.  
Explain why you made the choice you did, what appeals most to you about the route you chose, and what you think your choice says about you as a person.

## Example A

I would want to take the route that is very scenic. The one from the west. It takes 3 days. I think it is worth it though, since you get to see many beautiful things. The one that appeals to me the most is the giant trees you'll pass through. The lake and streams appeal to me also. My choice, I think, is good for me. I come from a very beautiful area and so I'd feel like I was at home there. It might not as steep but it will still be a challenge. As a person I think that it says a lot about me. I'm not afraid of taking a risk. I just like doing it in my own way. I know the east way is faster but I like to enjoy my self. I don't like to rush in to things but like I said I'll still do it. One thing is I would have to have someone with me. Family, friends, a guide- whoever, I couldn't go by myself. I'm not afraid, its just that I would want to share it with some one and have some one to talk to!



### Two Ways Up

I have two choices how to go up the mountain. I chose the one that has zigzagery lines and it takes a day and a half to get up the mountain. The reason why I chose this was because the other way up the mountain took three days to get to the top. What I think my choice says about me is that I don't like taking my time on things that I know I could do right away. And the reason why I say this is because I've always have said this to my self "Why take the long way up when you could take the short way up".

I hope you could understand what I'm trying to say.

I wood cov the les crall be cus I am  
ariagn sow I woid tacks the calinging was  
and plus it is the fasis way tha the top

*Awe-inspiring views, long peaceful treks, difficult climbs up craggy peaks: these are the joys of a hike in the mountains. I will climb from the west, challenging my endurance and my spirit. I will attack the mountain, facing every challenge that it can offer. This way, when I reach the summit and look down at the valley below, I will know that I have really achieved something. This accomplishment will show that I can overcome the mountains that confront me in my daily life.*

*There are three elements to success: belief, motivation, and perseverance. I will need to employ all three if I am to succeed in defeating the western route up the mountain.*

*As I begin the trek, there is no way to see the summit. But I must believe that the mountain's pinnacle lies above. I must keep going, even when my goal is out of sight.*

*On the second day of the climb, I will break through the tree line and get my first breathtaking view of the peak. This sight provides me with the motivation to continue even though I am dirty and tired. All through the second day, I will climb slowly over hundreds of switchbacks. I feel like I'm walking in place.*

*Finally, on the third day of my journey, I can see the snow-capped summit ahead. Excitedly, I begin my final climb. I am soon aware of the steepness of the trail. The air is growing thin, and the snow is growing deep. Now only perseverance will take me the rest of the way.*

*By choosing the west face I have met all the challenges of the mountain, and I have prevailed. I have grown as a person and as a mountaineer.*

I would take the trail so I can see the wilde  
animals and mor. I mit see wields life. I went to see  
the dear, and the Eagles and squirrels. Then I see  
scean the garte big Rive and the Wolf crike. Then  
I had seen the moatin.



KEY SCOREKey Scores for Training Papers  
Grade 8 • Informative Writing

4

## Commentary for Example A

This essay competently explains the choice of route, and what that choice says about the writer. Although there is ample and relevant support for taking the scenic route, it is organized in a somewhat random fashion. Simple sentence construction and a lack of transitions combine to make the essay somewhat choppy. Overall control of language is adequate, however, and the essay remains focused throughout.

3

## Commentary for Example B

This brief essay explains the choice of the steeper route in a rather tautological way: the shorter way is better because the longer way takes longer. In stating what the choice of a route signifies, the writer provides a variation on the same theme (“What I think my choice says about me is that I don’t like taking my time on things that I know I could do right away”). Use of language is occasionally awkward, but errors in spelling and grammar do not interfere with comprehension. There is some evidence of an organizational plan, followed to an abrupt conclusion.

1

## Commentary for Example C

This essay, besides being insufficiently developed, is so plagued by errors in mechanics as to obscure its meaning. It seems to advocate taking the more challenging (“calinging”) route because it is the fastest (“fasis”). It is difficult to discern any sense of organization or engagement in an essay of this length.

KEY SCORE

6

## Commentary for Example D

This essay uses a sophisticated organizing principle and vivid language to make a compelling argument for choosing the western route (e.g., “There are three elements to success: belief, motivation, and perseverance. I will need to employ all three if I am to succeed in defeating the western route up the mountain”). By equating mountaineering with personal growth, the writer implicitly conveys the significance of this choice (e.g., “...this accomplishment will show that I can overcome the mountains that confront me in my daily life”). Overall, a sophisticated and convincing essay.

2

## Commentary for Example E

This essay is essentially a short but rambling list of things one might see along the (unspecified) trail. Errors in spelling and word choice make it difficult to understand in spots (e.g., “Then I see scean the garte big Rive and the Wolf crike”). There is no sense of audience or engagement, and little evidence of organization.

## Training Papers to Score Grade 8 • Persuasive Writing

### INTRODUCTION

Here is a passage about some of the places and things that have been considered “Wonders of the World.” Read the passage and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

Over the years, many people have made lists of the most impressive and beautiful sights they have seen. Over two thousand years ago a man named Antipater of Sidon made a list of the “Seven Wonders of the World.” Among them he included the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Pyramids of Egypt, the statue of Zeus at Olympia in Greece, and the Pharos (lighthouse) of Alexandria in Egypt. All were impressive in size, beauty, and construction. All were inspirational and some, like the Pharos of Alexandria, had a very practical use.

Other people since Antipater have made different lists of “Wonders of the World.” Some lists have included the Great Wall of China, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, the Taj Mahal of India, and other places of special beauty and wonder. Other lists have included important inventions such as the electric light bulb and the printing press.



**Prompt for Grade 8 • Persuasive Writing**

If you could add an eighth “Wonder of the World,” what would it be? Citing the qualities and characteristics that you think are important, write an argument that supports your choice for what the “Eighth Wonder of the World” should be.

## Example A

I think that the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River should become one of the "Seven Wonders of the World." Down below I have listed some reasons why.

It is beautiful.

It is extremely large and extremely old.

It is just unbelievable.

I for one have never been there but I have seen pictures of it & I think it looks cool & very interesting.

I think the statu of Liberty should be one off the Eighth Wonders of the world. But some one eles says it should be the Grand Canyon because it rilly big and pritty. I say the Liberty because it represent are country. And our presedent is there. So I think it would be better. NO! he sayes. I think it the Grat Canyons is nicer because alot of people go there he sayes. I side alot of people go and it on tv alot and lots of people go to see the Statu. He sayes it on tv too and people go there. I side Ya but whan it is on it on allmost every channal and lots off pepol wich it. Pules it one off the biggest place in the would.

*The eighth wonder of the world should be the light bulb. It is useful for many things. It takes electricity and transforms it to let you see in the dark.*

*First, I believe the eighth wonder of the world should be the light bulb because it allows us to do things after dark. In the old days before electricity, people used to go to bed with the sun. With light bulbs, you can do just about anything you could do in the daytime. We can go to a football game at night, or even go skiing.*

*Light bulbs also make us safer. A light bulb manovers the flow of cars when used as a traffic light. Light bulbs are used to find lost or missing people when used as a search light. They also help us drive at night without running into other cars.*

*In conclusion, the eighth wonder of the world should be the light bulb because it takes electricity and changes it into heat and light. The light bulb makes night-time feel like day-time. It is very important in our lives today, and it makes our lives safer and more fun. Past generations did not have the light bulb, but thanks to Thomas Alva Edison we do, and so do future generations to come.*

*I think that the Sphynx Cat in Egypt should be the eighth wonder of the world, because it is so mysterious. It is a great wonder. What happened to its nose? There are many myths and tales about that. Some people think that Aladin was flying on his carpet when the builder of the sculpture was working on the nose. When Aladin passed the builder he got scared and he chipped off the nose by accident. Is that true? Nobody knows. It is a WONDER! Also why does it have a human head instead of a cat head? I don't know. That is also a WONDER! Since there are so many WONDERS about the Sphynx Cat, we should make it be the eighth WONDER of the world!*

*New York City should be the eighth wonder of the world. Its charm and ambéance make it one of the most beautiful cities in the world. New York houses some of the most important buildings and art in the free world. New York City is also one of the most inspirational places in today's society.*

*First, New York City is beautiful in every way. Many call it the capital of the world. Its mix of people are of all shapes, sizes and colors. They get along and help make the world a better place. New York is a real melting pot.*

*Secondly, "the Big Apple" is very important. Its buildings and museums contain ancient relics, beautiful artwork and some of the rarest sculptures in the free world. The buildings themselves are very famous, from the Empire State Building to the World Trade Center.*

*Many famous people were born in or live in New York City. Some of these people are movie stars or politicians. Even George Washington lived here when he was the president.*

*Last, New York City is extremely inspirational. Artists' imaginations are captivated by this city. Many great paintings and photographs capture the beauty and vitality of the Big Apple. The city has also been the sight of many movies, and the topic of many songs.*

*New York City's vigor and strength make it the heartbeat of the world. It is a city where visitors are struck with awe. It is probably the most important city in the world. Its inspirational qualities make it the perfect candidate for the eighth wonder of the world.*



## Key Scores for Training Papers

### Grade 8 • Persuasive Writing

#### KEY SCORE

3

#### Commentary for Example A

This essay, presented partially in outline format, provides three reasons why the Grand Canyon should be the eighth wonder of the world. This skeletal support, though relevant and accurate, is insufficiently developed. There is minimal evidence of engagement (e.g., “It is just unbelievable”), but this is undermined somewhat by the writer’s confession that “I for one have never been there.”

2

#### Commentary for Example B

This essay, instead of choosing one candidate for eighth wonder of the world, presents an argument between proponents of two different candidates—the Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon. However, neither argument is made in very convincing terms. Weaknesses in grammar and spelling tend to make comprehension difficult (e.g., “Pules it one off the biggest place in the would”). The argument(s) are rambling and weak, following no overt organizational plan and coming to no conclusion.

5

#### Commentary for Example C

This essay illuminates many of the reasons that the light bulb should be the eighth wonder of the world. It is well supported with relevant and accurate details, and its focus is unwavering and clear. Sentence structure is somewhat repetitive, however. The organizational plan is pedestrian, albeit balanced and logical. There are few errors in mechanics or spelling, and overall the use of language is fluent and controlled. This essay demonstrates a strong sense of engagement throughout.



KEY SCORE

4

## Commentary for Example D

This brief but engaging essay uses an interrogative strategy to argue that the Sphinx should be the eighth wonder of the world. Although only a couple of details are used to support this argument, they are effectively deployed as mysteries or “wonders.” Because there are questions about the Sphinx that cannot be answered, the writer concludes that the Sphinx is, by definition, a “WONDER!” Although elaboration is merely adequate, this essay demonstrates a good control of language, with few errors in mechanics or spelling.

6

## Commentary for Example E

This essay employs vivid language and a strong sense of engagement in arguing for New York City as the eighth wonder of the world. The argument is well supported with a wealth of detail, ranging from New York’s reputation as a melting pot to its preeminence in the arts. Sentence structure is varied and complex, and the use of language is sophisticated and precise (e.g., “Its buildings and museums contain ancient relics, beautiful artwork and some of the rarest sculptures in the free world”). This essay makes good use of transitions, and flows in a balanced and logical path to its conclusion.



# ***Training Papers and Key Scores***

## ***Grade 10***



## Training Papers to Score

### Grade 10 • Informative Writing

#### INTRODUCTION

Here is a passage that illustrates how persistence can pay off in achieving a goal. Read the passage and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

Some tasks and goals are easy to achieve. Others, however, can demand long periods of commitment and energy. History is filled with examples of individuals who have spent years carrying a single project to completion.

For example, Michelangelo, the renowned sixteenth-century Italian artist, spent four years painting a vast panorama of scenes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. A great deal of his time was spent high up on a scaffold, lying on his back painting under very difficult conditions.

Another example is the American inventor Thomas Edison. In the late 1870s, he endured many months of frustration and thousands of failed experiments in his search for an incandescent electric light bulb. Before he succeeded in his search, he said, “Why, I have not failed, I have just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”

Persistence has also been shown by large groups of people. During the Middle Ages, many craftsmen from a city would work together to build a cathedral. The process was so long and so complicated that several generations of a family spent their entire lifetimes working on a cathedral they would never see completed. Even entire nations have exemplified persistence. Spain struggled seven hundred years—from the eighth century until 1492, when the last invaders were driven out—in its efforts to become united under one government.

**Prompt for Grade 10 • Informative Writing**

Persistence paid off for the people described in the passage.  
Describe a time when persistence paid off in your own life.  
Explain how you benefited from sticking with something until it  
was accomplished.

## Example A

*Weight Lifting*

Weight lifting is fun for a lot of people. People do it for many different reasons to. Some lift for strength. Others lift for bulk, and some lift just to feel healthy.

Weight lifting takes a lot of time and work. It takes at the least an hour and a half to get a good workout. Any less and you would be not lifting the right way. I can handle giving up a hour and a half each day to accomplish my goal. Which is to get bigger for wrestling. I have gotten bigger by lifting weights, but I want to get even bigger and faster.

A couple of benifits of weight lifting are: building muscle, getting stronger/faster, able to withstand injury, and much more. I want to build more muscle to get more weight so I can dominate in wrestling. Plus with stronger muscles there is less chance of injury, because they can withstand more tention.

I am working hard at weight lifting so I can get stronger to be a better wrestler. I have to be persistent to keep working out and giving every thing I have, and I will accomplish my goal of being a dominating wrestler.

*It paid off when I got my Nintendo I  
bugged my parents for two days. So I  
got it.*

Last year in Geography there was a big assignment due at the end of the year. They gave us like two months to due it. I started on it like right after they assigned it to us. We could pick to make a game book report or create a country. I pick create a country. I thought it would be interesting. Well I thought of a name of a county I could name it. It was Dairyland. I made I shap of a cow and put the railroad system in it you could take milk everywhere. Ever night after school I write and drew maps and colored them, I put a lot of time into that. then I had to right a report on it that was two pages long. Then I had to give a speach about it and why it was called Dairyland and why I had all of the railroad system. And I did good on it.



*I have done many worth while projects in my life. One project which I have worked on is my skills in baseball. I have played and competed for about 10 years. I started as a 4 year old and never stopped.*

*When baseball started, I never thought I would be actually good at it. I was wrong. When I was in seventh grade, I went to many tournaments with my team and had success. Ever since that year, I have played baseball descently.*

*Since I have been in high school I have played baseball as my main sport. I play in every game, even though there is a lot of competition to be a starter. Baseball is something I enjoy. I have persavered, and gotten better at every day. I hope to play throughout my life.*

*In my particular experience persistence paid off at last. I had set a goal for myself and I accomplished it. When I had reached my goal, which was to have \$400 dollars, I was going to buy the CD player for my car that I had been admiring for several months.*

*As I was putting money away, I experienced many temptations. I began to notice other things I could buy as the money accumulated, but I was able to suppress my urges and keep my money in the bank.*

*When I finally had all of the money I needed I was exposed to another test. I was informed that the CD player was out of stock, and I would have to wait almost a month before it was available. I wasn't about to give up, so I kept saving.*

*After a two weeks of hard work I had saved even more than I needed. My grand total had reached \$725. I now had enough money for the top of the line model. I wouldn't have to wait for the cheaper one to get in.*

*I cashed my checks and went right down to the stereo shop and bought the CD player right then and there. I was very excited because I had overcome many temptations and now had an even better stereo system than the one I planned on having.*

*In the end my persistence paid off, and I was glad that I was smart enough to keep saving.*



## Key Scores for Training Papers

### Grade 10 • Informative Writing

#### KEY SCORE

4

#### Commentary for Example A

This essay does a competent job of explaining how persistence can help one “get bigger for wrestling.” It is well developed (as is the author, we can assume), but some supporting details are merely listed. The use of short, simple sentences and the occasional fragment make the writing choppy. Overall, control of language is adequate, and there is some sense of engagement.

1

#### Commentary for Example B

This response is devoid of development: It does little more than provide the premise for an essay, and then fails to deliver. Papers of this length can provide no evidence of organization or awareness of audience.

3

#### Commentary for Example C

This essay about persistence in completing a school project is weakly organized, but remains focused on the topic. It follows a basic sequential pattern, culminating in an abrupt one-line conclusion. Use of language is awkward, and frequent errors in grammar and spelling interfere somewhat with communication. Sentence structure is simple and repetitive.

KEY SCORE

4

## Commentary for Example D

This brief essay adequately explains the importance of persistence in perfecting one's baseball skills. It is well organized, with a serviceable introduction and closing. While support is thin, it is focused and relevant. Control of language is good, with only occasional lapses in syntax (e.g., "I never thought I would be actually good at it").

5

## Commentary for Example E

This essay shows how persistent self-denial can help one achieve the long-term financial goal of purchasing an expensive CD player. It is well organized, and creates a modest amount of suspense as the writer attempts to "suppress [his/her] urges" and wait until the stereo equipment is at last in stock. A real sense of engagement is evident as this struggle is recounted. Control of language is good, and there are few errors in grammar or spelling.

## Training Papers to Score

### Grade 10 • Persuasive Writing

#### INTRODUCTION

Life is filled with challenges, and we often face difficult decisions. Here is a passage about Jacob, who is struggling to make an important decision. Read the passage and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

Jacob is sixteen years old and in the tenth grade. He is funny and outgoing, and as a result he is popular among his classmates and his teachers. He is also a pretty good athlete and sings in the school choir. However, Jacob is not very studious. He has trouble concentrating on his schoolwork and would rather just have a good time. He thinks school is a waste of his time, since he's not planning to go to college and believes he already knows enough to get a job. He's considering dropping out of school and finding a job so that he can make a lot of money and buy the car he wants. His parents say it is his decision. His teachers think he should stay in school and try to apply himself to learning more. Some of his friends tell him it would be great to have money and freedom, so why not go for it?

**Prompt for Grade 10 • Persuasive Writing**

Imagine that Jacob decided to drop out and that two years have passed. Now Bill, Jacob's younger friend, is thinking about dropping out, too. Bill has come to Jacob for advice. What advice do you think Jacob would give to Bill? Explain what you think Jacob's position would be, based on what might have happened in the last two years. Back up your argument with logical reasons and specific examples.

## Example A

I think Jacob give to Bill this worlds. Bill You can doe best thing because You are a inteligent person and You can doe best thing in all Your life for example Bill maybe in two Years You can have a money also You can have a house and best all things for You and other example maybe in two Years You can have a wife and You can give all the best things for You wife and You can have a sweetY home and for Your future You can have more things like shildrens or a family and You need give to they a good eduaction and a good home also in two Years You ca doe a important person for all the people and You can have the respect of all the people so I think Jacob give to Bill this worlds because Jacob is friend of Bill and Jacob was with the misma situacion and I think too Jacob give to Bill this worlds because Jacob is a friendship because Jacob think in her friend.



Dear Bill - I think you should stay in school. It may seem fun to have freedom and money. But in the long run your better of staying in school. I wish I would of. I can't really get a good job because I missed so much school, and you don't really have freedom when you have to work 40 hours per week. So look at me before you decide to quit school, and think again.

*As a teenager from a similar household, I understand the overwhelming desire for independence, but we as teenagers have come to know through experience that life without a basic high school education is an arduous one. I believe that Jacob, over the past two years, may have come to the same conclusion.*

*I'm sure that in the beginning Jacob assumed that a lot of high paying jobs would be his for the asking simply because he was funny, outgoing, popular and a good athlete. But what he did not comprehend is that a business couldn't care less that you sang in the school choir or that you were popular. All they see is a high school dropout who would rather goof off than work. Once they have come to this conclusion, they have no reason - founded on your past record - to believe that your attitude will miraculously change once you've been hired.*

*Knowing of these dire consequences first hand, Jacob would try to prevent Bill from making the same mistake. He would convey to him that his own ignorance was his undoing, and that Bill should get off the path to destruction and take the pathway of success. The only way to achieve this goal is to stay in school and get a solid foundation, and then your physical, mental and financial freedom will follow. Most likely Bill, being a typical stubborn teenager, will protest at first. But, if Jacob is a sincere and true friend he will find a way to make Bill see how detrimental dropping out can be.*

*I myself have seen many youths in society throw their lives away on a reckless impulse compounded with false hopes of freedom and wealth. But some are deaf to all the warnings, and it seems that they lose all their good sense. Jacob must make sure that Bill realizes how much one decision can determine the outcome of his whole life.*

Well Bill, I think you should stay in school, and get your high school diploma. When you are not a high school graduate it is harder for you to get a job. If you do get a job you get paid lower amount of money. The only jobs that you probably can get are working in a fast food restaurant or being a dishwasher etc.... Now if you finish school you can get a job in a office or in some kind of business besides working in a fast food joint. Your pay will start out higher, and it looks better on your resumay.

Just think 5 or 10 years from now where are you going to be working? Cleaning yards, or jumping from one fast food restaurant to another. You might get lucky if you find a job that pays over the minimum wage.

It's hard to get things if you are only working for \$5.75 or \$6.00 an hour. You'll be stuck in one spot all your money will go to your rent and groceries'. It will be hard for you to get a car or anything new. You will have to budget the little money you get to last you for a month. You will probably have to get two or three jobs if you want to move up in life. So I would recommend to you that you stay in school and graduate. I screwed up by dropping out of school. Now I don't have time to do anything except for working long, long hours so I can support myself.

*If Bill was contemplating whether or not to drop out of high school, Jacob's advice would be not to. Jacob would have suffered and struggled for two straight years. He would of had to just drop the dream of the "perfect new car". Obviously he wasn't eligible for college and without a high school diploma, jobs are hard to come by. He would have rent, food, all kinds of things to pay for that he never thought of.*

*Upon Bill's questioning, Jacob's reply would be this: No pain, no gain. You have to work hard for everything you want. It's not just going to be given to you. People don't seem to comprehend this. Especially teenagers. If you would just wait and struggle now, in school where the struggle isn't nearly as hard as trying to make a living without education, you could have even more. Once you have a college degree, you can pursue anything. Become a doctor, a lawyer, then think of all you could afford to buy. Plus you'll have the respect of others and day to day security.*

*However, Bill being a teenager probably wouldn't listen. He lacks the wisdom and maturity. The only way to understand what Jacob told him would be to go through it himself.*



## Key Scores for Training Papers

### Grade 10 • Persuasive Writing

#### KEY SCORE

1

#### Commentary for Example A

This essay, although lengthy, is not developed. It consists of a single rambling sentence which seems to allude to the prompt without ever taking a position. Serious and frequent errors in spelling and grammar make comprehension very difficult. Although the essay is evidently predicting certain outcomes for Bill, it is never clear what advice Jacob has offered. Overall, a confused and confusing response.

3

#### Commentary for Example B

This essay suffers from a lack of development, but it is nevertheless focused on the topic and offers a couple of relevant reasons for staying in school. Spelling, grammar, and sentence construction are adequate. There is evidence of an intended audience, as the essay is in the form of a letter from Jacob to Bill. The letter format is also evidence of an organizational plan.

6

#### Commentary for Example C

This essay is a sophisticated explanation of how Jacob has learned from his mistakes and passed his hard-won wisdom on to Bill. The writing is insightful and engaged, incorporating personal experiences to bolster the “stay in school” message (e.g., “As a teenager from a similar household, I understand the overwhelming desire for independence...”). The use of language is superior, and word choice is vivid and precise (e.g., “arduous,” “detrimental,” etc.). The organization is balanced and logical. Overall, an excellent response.

KEY SCORE

4

## Commentary for Example D

This essay sustains a conversational tone from the outset (“Well Bill, I think you should stay in school...”). The arguments which follow are persuasive and relevant, but they are organized in a list-like manner which lessens their impact. Control of language is adequate, and sentence structure is somewhat varied. Errors in spelling and grammar are infrequent.

5

## Commentary for Example E

This essay is well developed and provides several good reasons why Jacob would advise Bill to stay in school. The first paragraph lists some of the troubles Jacob would have brought on himself by dropping out (e.g., “He would have rent, food, all kinds of things to pay for that he never thought of”). The essay then segues into Jacob’s actual reply to Bill. The advice dispensed is more formulaic and less sophisticated than in a Score Point 6 paper (e.g., “No pain, no gain. You have to work hard for everything you want”). Sentence patterns are varied, but there are occasional lapses in syntax (e.g., “Jacob’s advice would be not to”). Nevertheless, the writer is engaged with the topic and shows a real understanding of the issues at hand (e.g., “struggle now, in school where the struggle isn’t nearly as hard as trying to make a living”). Overall, this is a commendable response.





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